Teacher Options Mean No Layoffs

Department of Education

News Releases

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School boards now have options within their budgets that should prevent layoffs for teachers, and ensure a reduction of no more than 400 teaching positions provincewide.

In a statement in the House of Assembly today, Education Minister Jane Purves said new teacher workforce-adjustment options are progressive, good for teachers, and good for education.

"We expect the options now on the table will appeal to hundreds of teachers," said the minister. "Once school boards reduce beyond the limit of 400 teaching positions, they can hire new teachers at less cost to the system. More significantly, these teachers will bring new ideas and energy to our classrooms to mix with the experience and dedication of our teachers now there."

The four teacher workforce-adjustment options are voluntary, cost-neutral, and yield salary savings.

Under the first option, a teacher would work part time for two years while continuing full-time pension contributions to protect the future. This is expected to interest young parents.

A second part-time option could appeal to teachers close to retirement who want to ease out of the classroom. For two years the teacher would work part time and receive a reduced pension while making full pension contributions. After two years the teacher would retire with a full pension.

A third option provides teachers, age 50 and older, the opportunity to retire with a pension adjustment.

Option four allows a teacher who is two years short of retirement to take a leave of absence while retaining a full pension at the time of retirement.

Each option will be posted on the Department of Education website at **www.ednet.ns.ca** .

The Department of Education will approach the Nova Scotia Teachers Union to extend a deadline that would normally trigger layoff notices to begin before the end of April.

"This would allow teachers to consider the options before them, without the unnecessary stress of receiving layoff notices," said the minister.

Ms. Purves has asked school boards to rework their budgets based on the workforce-adjustment options.

"My bottom line is this: There will be no more than 400 teaching positions taken out of the system as a result of this budget. That commitment is firm. If the final numbers vary from what is estimated, we will sit down again with school boards and work through the numbers."

She cautioned, however, that everyone has to be prepared to think and do things differently.

"We must look first and always at administration, and find savings in areas that have the least effect on classroom priorities."

The department wants to work with schools on protecting classroom priorities within the budget reductions. Based on 470 schools, 400 teachers, on average, mean less than one teacher per school. Allowing for differences school to school, class sizes are expected to change by no more than one student, on average.

New curriculum efforts will focus on mathematics, sciences and literacy. Curriculum development and implementation planned for almost 40 new programs, from geomatics to geology, will be slowed to stretch the budget for textbooks, and save time and dollars otherwise needed for teacher professional development.

Student enrolments are also projected to drop by 6.5 per cent over the next five years.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

School boards now have options within their budgets that should prevent layoffs for teachers, and ensure a reduction of no more than 400 teaching positions provincewide.

Education Minister Jane Purves says new teacher workforce-adjustment options are progressive, good for teachers, and good for education.

Purves says she expects the options will appeal to hundreds of teachers.

The minister says that once school boards reduce beyond the limit of 400 teaching positions they can hire new teachers at

less cost to the system.

The options will be posted on the Department of Education

website (www.ednet.ns.ca).

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NOTE: The following is a Department of Education fact sheet:

School Board Budgets 2000-01

Total Public Education Funding
1999-2000 Estimate -- $680,543,000
2000-01 Estimate -- $680,099,000

-- In addition to this funding, Nova Scotia is investing $1.5 million this year to give more support for children as they learn to read.

-- There are pressures within the total budget envelope including $15 million for teacher salary increases and $30 million for school leases. These pressures require school boards to reduce $20 million provincewide from the teacher salary budgets.

-- Original school board projections of more than 700 teacher reductions were made prior to the teacher workforce adjustments, based on the following mathematical calculation:
Boards were given $20 million in teacher cuts and $3.6 million in formula cuts. It appears they took these numbers and translated it to a number of teachers (744 teachers X $48,000 X 8/12 = $23.6 million).

-- With the teacher workforce-adjustment options (described below), school boards are expected to reduce teaching positions by no more than 400 net. Beyond the 400, school boards can begin rehiring teachers at a lower cost.

-- School boards are also being asked to reduce administration, as the department is doing.

Teacher Workforce-Adjustment Options

The Government of Nova Scotia is offering four Teacher Workforce-Adjustment Options to encourage teachers to leave early or work part time. These options will assist regional school boards in

meeting their budget allocations for 2000-01, and respond to longstanding requests from teachers for more flexibility in employment circumstances.

A net total of 400 teachers is required this year. In calculating this number, it has been estimated that normal retirements will be 88 and attrition for other reasons usually runs at 1.5 per cent, or 150.

These options have been designed to be cost-neutral so there will be no major impact on future public school budgets.

All of the options can be accomplished by changes to the regulations under the Teachers' Pension Act. These regulations are made jointly by the minister of finance and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

Work force adjustment options:
1) Pro-rated pension: For anyone 50 or above with at least two years of service. The reduction would be five per cent per year for each year the teacher falls short of full pension requirements.

2) Part-time work, full-time pension contributions: A teacher could work part time for two years while the teacher and province continue to make full-time pension contributions.

3) Eligible retirees take option 2: For the two years of part-time work, teachers receive a reduced pension.

4) Pension Bridging: Teachers can take a two-year leave without pay for two years, then retire. Teachers and the province will pay pension contributions based on full salary.

Managing the Change, Protecting Student Priorities

-- Fewer students = fewer teachers: Over the past four years, student enrolments dropped by 3.5 per cent while teacher numbers went up by about the same percentage. Enrolments are projected to drop by 6.5 per cent more over the next five years.

Average Impact Per Classroom: Understanding there will be differences school to school, the reduction will change class sizes by no more than one student, on average.
-- Room for Adjustments in High School Classes: Almost 4,000 high school classes have less than 20 students. More than 1,800 of those classes have fewer than 15 students.

Slowing Curriculum Change: This year alone curriculum development and implementation were planned for almost 40 new programs, from geomatics to geology. This saves dollars for school boards in teacher professional development, and available dollars for textbooks go further. New mathematics, sciences and literacy

curriculum will proceed.

-- Reduce Administration: The Department of Education will reduce administration significantly. School boards are expected to take similar measures.

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